



Key News



#InvolvedWithOngo

Take a look at how you can get involved

Tenants talk

See how you've influenced rent statements

February 2020

This is the first Key News of 2020, so I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy New Year.

It's been a positive start to the year, with **our new common board now in place**. We had our first meeting in January, which went well, and we have immediately continued working to get our governance rating back to compliant. We have completed over 85% of this work so far – find out more about the new governance structure on page 14.

Another positive step is our **brand new retirement scheme**, Chesleigh House, in Gainsborough which is due to be completed in March. This is just one part of our aim to build 225 new homes every year for the next 10 years. Check out more details of this development, and our other plans, on page 11.

Our **Next Level project**, which helps to develop employment skills for those in work, has been extended until the end of March. The project has been popular since it first began, supporting 831 people in total, and it's great that even more people will now be able to benefit from the training and mentoring available. This is explained in further detail on page 19.

As voted for by our tenant group Community Voice and then agreed by board members, **all social and affordable rents will increase by 2.7% from April this year**. Page nine includes more information behind the decision and what it means, but we want to assure you that all factors and potential implications were taken into account before it was voted upon. We have a range of support in place to help people through this change if you have any issues.

Finally, a new year can mean new horizons and new beginnings. This could include getting involved in shaping the services you receive and the homes and communities where you live. We have recently **developed our involvement opportunities**, especially our digital means of feedback through our Digital Tenants and Tenant Testers groups, and we have a brand new #InvolvedWithOngo postcard where you can choose a method of involvement that suits you.

Happy reading!



In the know

We love to hear from you - get in touch with your stories

editor@ongoo.co.uk

OngoHomes

@OngoUK

Credit Union

We have a partnership with the Hull & East Yorkshire Credit Union (HEYCU), and they have an exclusive £25 bonus offer.

Check out the partnership...



Homeownership exhibition

The second annual homeownership expo will be taking place on Saturday 21 March at the Engineering UTC Northern Lincolnshire.

See more information...



Prevent programme

Humberside Police have a new online referral form to report any Prevent related concerns.

Find out more...



Pension changes

Changes to the amount of state retirement pension paid to mixed age couples have been announced.

Take a look in more detail...



Employment support

Did you know we have a partnership with Adult Skills?

Adult Skills are part of North Lindsey College, and are based at our Cole Street office in Scunthorpe town centre. They offer a wide-range of training for anybody over the age of 19 who are on a low income or unemployed.

The courses include Maths, English, IT, customer service, mental wellbeing, health and safety, and many more. They also offer distance learning courses (these are available for those in employment too) which can be completed at home in your own time.

All our courses are accredited which means, for each completed course, you will receive a qualification that could help you gain employment or support a career change/promotion.



Check out the Learning from Home courses that Adult Skills offer

Take a look at more employment support that is available

To find out more about the Adult Skills courses or to sign up:

Wednesdays 9.30am - 12 noon at the Ongo Recruitment office on Cole Street

01724 294124

adultskillsongonorthlindsey.ac.uk



A life-changing difference

"Without the support, I would have ended up on the streets."

George moved into his first Ongo home in June 2018, but soon got into a lot of difficulty with his rent. His rent money from Universal Credit was being paid directly to him, and he had a number of outgoings from his personal allowance which meant he was 'really struggling' to keep up with his rent payments.



George at The Arc

That's when Danielle from our Income Collection team stepped in to help.

Firstly, she requested that the housing element of his Universal Credit be paid directly to us. She also helped him with budgeting which allowed George to begin making payments out of his personal allowance.

He was then referred to our Tenancy Support team who, after investigating, contacted the Citizens Advice Bureau. As George had worked in a supermarket for over 20 years, he was successful in receiving money from Rotary Aid (a charity in place to help supermarket employees).

Soon, George's rent account was clear and in credit by the end of last year.

Check out how he feels Danielle was 'helpful and supportive' throughout the process, and how he can now 'fully enjoy' being part of a local community.

"All of this support – from Danielle, from the Support team, from Adult Skills – has made such a positive difference to my life.

"Everything has changed for the better."

Find out how we can help and support you.

Tenant takeover

With Kelly Drewry

In each edition, we talk to a tenant volunteer to find out what they do in their community. This time we talk to Kelly about her involvement, what courses she has done, and how it has helped her mental health.



I've been in my Ongo home since...

I first wanted to get involved because...

Other ways I give back to the community are...

Some of the courses I have done include...

All of this has helped me to...

Click on each phrase to find out Kelly's involvement journey.



Kelly (second from left) with friends in her community

Our vision is to create & sustain truly vibrant communities. Like Kelly, you can also be a big part of helping to achieve that. You can help shape the services we offer, and you can influence decisions that affect your home and community.

Check out the Customer Engagement handbook

Register your interest on our website

Ongo Talk

We have a counselling and life-coaching service

Ongo Talk is a project for people who wish to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing to create a brighter future for themselves.

Our service, delivered by a team of skilled and qualified staff, aims to help people who have a range of mental health and psychological issues. The project develops their confidence and skills, and enables them to move towards improving their circumstances.

Since the launch of the project Ongo Talk has supported 81 local people where, after assessment, they have been offered the appropriate mental health service.



Find out from **Maryanne Fitzgerald, our Next Level Manager**, how you can benefit from the project

A person who has accessed the support said...

The training that we have available includes: (click on each for further information)

If you think you would benefit from this support, or if you would like to find out more:

OngoTalk@ongo.co.uk

ongo.co.uk

Money matters

An update from our Income Collection team

We understand that there can be pressure on your money, especially at busy times such as school holidays and during the festive period.

However, you don't need to struggle. Here are some handy hints for how you can save money at these busy times of the year:



School holidays

Kids bored during the holidays? Are they looking for something to do?

There are a number of **children's centres** that offer a range of activities and services for youngsters and parents alike. Also, there's loads of **free events** that take place in the local area to keep children entertained.

Christmas and New Year

Why not open a **Christmas Saver** account with the Hull & East Yorkshire Credit Union (HEYCU)? You will receive an exclusive £25 offer for joining, and it's a great way to plan and budget for Christmas already.

Check out the HEYCU leaflet for more details, and how to sign up.

School term time

We know that things like school meals and uniform can impact on people's finances.

Did you know your children may be eligible to receive **free school meals**, and that you can apply for **school clothing grants**, through the North Lincolnshire Council's website?

We also hold a number of events throughout the year. Check them out on our website.

Non-chargeable rent weeks

If you pay your rent monthly, then you are still expected to pay the same amount every month even if there are non-chargeable rent weeks in that period.

This doesn't mean that you are missing out on these weeks. We only expect you to pay four weeks rent each month, so you pay 48 weeks rent in a 52 week year.

If you're in arrears, then you must pay in the non-chargeable rent weeks to get your account into credit and in line with your tenancy agreement.

Rent increase

From 6 April 2020, the cost of renting your home will increase by 2.7%.

Why?

After four years of government imposed rent reductions, rents for social housing from April 2020 will now follow a new rent 'standard'.

This means that Housing Associations like ourselves can increase rents by up to CPI (the Consumer Price Index inflation measure) plus 1%. The government have said that this standard will stay in place for the next five years. CPI at September 2019 was 1.7%, meaning that rents can increase by up to 2.7% in April.

A report was delivered to Community Voice, our main tenant group, who considered the information and asked questions about the potential outcomes. All members were unanimously in favour of increasing rents by 2.7%.

This vote was taken to the first meeting of the new common board, and all board members approved the decision.

What does this mean?

What happens now?

You should have received a letter in the post, updating you on your rent costs and any additional service charges. If you have any questions, check out our handy Q&A guide on our website.

If you're struggling with your rent payments, get in touch with us and we'll be able to offer guidance and advice. Message us on **live chat, or on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.**

Tenants talk

We held two tenant focus groups this month

Both sessions were held to collect views on the re-designing of our rent statement, with particular focus on what tenants liked and how they could be improved.

12 tenants attended the workshops where they were asked for their views on three activities. The first one saw the tenants have a look at examples of statements and bills from other organisations, with them placing green stickers on what they liked and red stickers on the parts they disliked.

They then opened an example of one of our rent statements from which they marked down the first three things they were drawn to. Finally, they looked at the statement as a whole highlighting what they thought worked well, and what was unclear.



Joanna Wojcik, who participated, said: "It was the first time I've done something like this, and I really enjoyed it."

"The session was a great opportunity to share our thoughts and to help influence improvements. I'm looking forward to seeing the re-designed statements later this year."

If you would like to be kept up-to-date about similar opportunities in the future, sign up to our [Tenant Testers](#) panel.

New homes

New retirement scheme

24 brand new retirement flats will soon be completed in Gainsborough.

A mixture of one and two-bed homes are part of the Chesleigh House development, and are available to anybody over the age of 55.

Find out more details...



Chesleigh House



Part of the development

Westcliff regeneration

The final phase of the Westcliff regeneration project is due to finish soon.

The development is made up of 19 homes which include a mixture of two and three-bed houses, two-bed bungalows and three-bed bungalows that are disability accessible.

Check out some further information...

Queensway and Trent View

Proposals for two new developments in Scunthorpe have been submitted.

12 one-bed flats at a site off Bellingham Road near Queensway, and eight two-bed bungalows behind Tent View House on Bridges Road, make up the separate plans.

Take a look at what the plans include...



The Bridges Road plan

Get #InvolvedWithOngo

Community Voice in the spotlight



Community Voice is our main tenant group that represents the views, concerns and interests of all tenants.

The group makes decisions on operational and customer-facing issues (including how we provide our services). This helps to influence improvements to housing and communities within the areas we operate.

Any tenant or leaseholder are welcome to become members, and we are always on the lookout for new people to join the group. We meet formally on a monthly basis but we also would love for tenants to get involved in the consultation and decision making by getting involved digitally.

Our main achievements last year included:

Click on each to find out more...



All members are passionate about making a difference. Check out what being involved means to them...

If you are interested, or would like to find out more, send us an **email** or visit the **website**.

Resident Scrutiny Panel

Challenge, change, improve



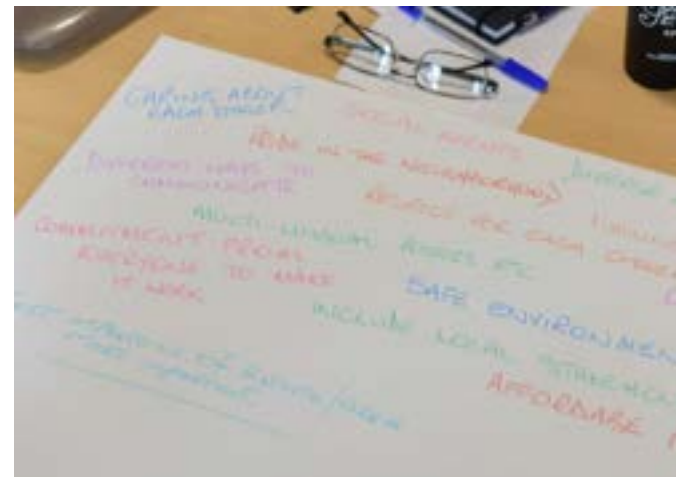
We currently have some vacancies on our Resident Scrutiny Panel. They are a group of tenants who work together to investigate different aspects of Ongo to see what could be improved, and to help ensure services are the best that they can be.

Recently, the group has looked into areas such as the current lettable standard of our homes. They made a number of recommendations which, in all cases, initially goes to Community Voice. This means fellow tenants have the first say in whether the suggested improvements are approved or not.

Being part of the panel really can make a difference, helping to make recommendations for future improvements to our services that will benefit other tenants and their local communities.

You might be thinking 'what's in it for me?' Well, here's just a few reasons to join:

Click on each for more details...



Find out more on our website and to register your interest.

One of our Customer Engagement team will then be in contact with you to discuss the opportunities further.

Meet the new common board

We have a new governance structure in place

As part of our governance review, the new structure has gone from 10 boards and three committees to just four boards and two committees. **Find out what these are:**



Back row (left to right):
Melvin Kenyon, Bob Walder, Liz Cook, Rachel Cook, Steve Hepworth, Tim Mills, Paula Gouldthorpe

Front row (left to right):
Helen Lennon, Michael Finster-Smith, Natalie Cresswell, John Wright

At their first meeting in January, they discussed and approved a range of different topics. These included:

Click on each for more information...

Keep a look-out in future Key News editions for further updates. You can also stay up-to-date by visiting our [website](#), liking us on [Facebook](#), and following us on [Twitter](#).

Back on track

"I am so much happier now, the whole experience has been amazing."



Our Tenancy Support team

This time last year, to say Tracy was struggling would be an understatement.

After coming out of a long-term marriage, Tracy became distant from her children, suffered from severe anxiety, didn't feel safe in her private rented flat, and then felt she was being 'passed from pillar to post' after ending up in a Salvation Army hostel.

But things quickly changed for the better.

She had never heard of Ongo before but, after being sent a link to our website, she soon completed an application form and bid on some of our available homes. Before she knew it, she was moving in and feeling 'right at home straight away'.

Tracy said: "I've felt safe here from the very beginning, and I feel so much more relaxed compared to how I was before. The whole process was smooth from start to finish, and I'd recommend Ongo to anybody."

However, she had felt afraid and overwhelmed at the prospect of changing over to Universal Credit and applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in her new home. Support was at hand though. Sunita (part of our Tenancy Support team) helped her with the entire process, and Tracy explains how she had gone 'above and beyond' her role.

She said: "Sunita has been an absolute godsend. I had no idea where to start with it all, but she made it clear that, if there was anything that she could help me with, then she would do. It made me feel really safe and happy knowing that.

"I've never experienced such help and support before, you don't feel like you just get your new home and then that's it. The support has been amazing, and it has made such a difference to my life."

Let's get digital

16 tenants have received a free tablet

In December, we launched a call for tenants to become Digital Tenants. After receiving more than 100 applications, 16 were successfully selected at random.

Our Digital Tenants have received a free tablet device to use our digital channels, which include My Home, our website, social media, live chat, and email, whenever they need to contact us.

They will also participate in regular feedback sessions about their experience using our online channels, and how we could improve them.

Andre Tinnie, Digital Tenant, said: "I'm really looking forward to getting involved with the development of the My Home app and the various other online channels.

"It will be great to influence improvements, and to make the digital platforms that Ongo offer the very best they can be for all tenants."

Another successful applicant, Amber Fearon, added: "I'm very grateful for what Ongo have done for me since I've been a tenant, so it'll be great to help out and to give something back."

We will be recruiting more Digital Tenants over the next twelve months. If you fancy becoming one, visit our [website](#) to find out more.



Helping us to help you

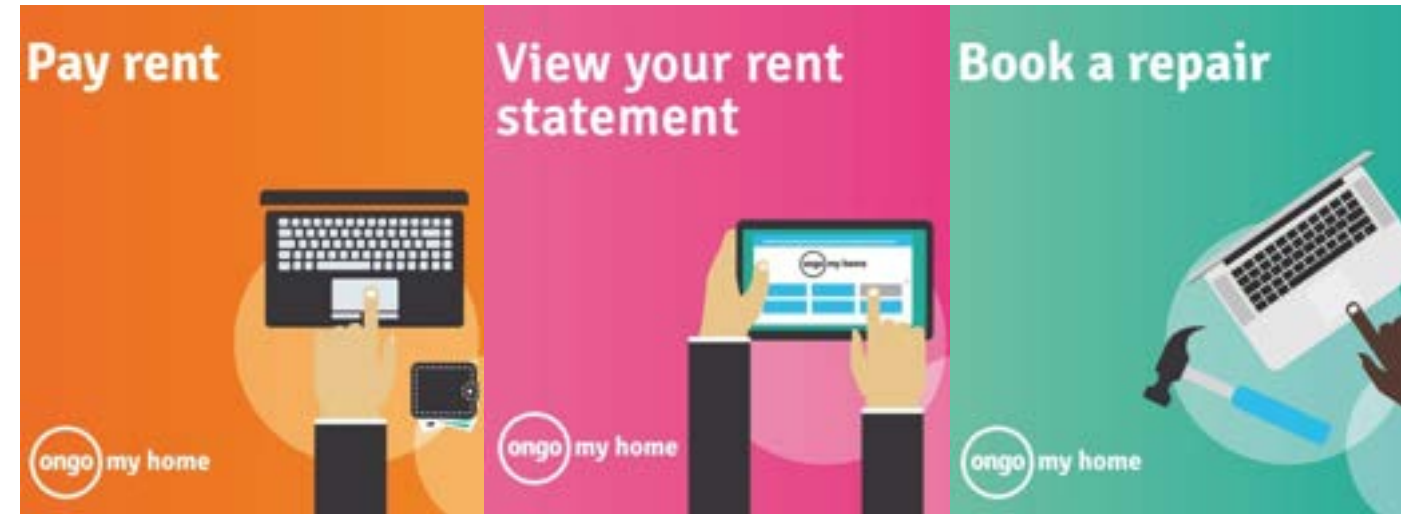


Registering an account is now much easier

You've been telling us that registering a My Home account isn't very easy, so we have made some changes to make this simpler for you.

You can now register using just your postcode, date of birth and email address. Like before, you can still choose to register with your tenancy number too if you've got it to hand, which is slightly quicker.

We have also made some changes to how you fill out your date of birth. You told us this wasn't easy to use on some devices, as well as the way the privacy notices are displayed on the screen. Now, you will be able to log on as soon as you have registered and benefit from all My Home has to offer such as:



Already registered but can't remember your login details? You can request a new password at myhome.ongo.co.uk/ForgotPassword

To register or log on, head to the My Home [website](#) or search for 'Ongo My Home' on the [Apple](#) and [Android](#) app stores.

In the spotlight

Take a look at some events in the community

Bringing people together at The Arc

On Christmas Day, people were welcomed from the neighbourhood who would otherwise spend the festive period alone. Over 20 residents came together to celebrate, enjoy dinner, entertainment, gifts, and to spend the day meeting new people and chatting to neighbours.

Last month, a 'Fresh Start' event was held to showcase the range of opportunities available for the local community to get involved in. Nearly 50 people came along to learn more about services we and other organisations have to offer, and to take part in activities such as planting hyacinth.



Local resident Emma Smith attended both events and said: "These days have really helped to benefit the community."

"It was heart-warming on Christmas Day to spend the day together, and to get to meet new people. The Fresh Start afternoon helped us to learn about what is available to us in the local area, and to recommend certain improvements to make the community even better."

Visit The Arc's [website](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) pages to find out about future events and to get involved.

Next Level success

Due to their popularity, our Next Level and Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programmes have been extended until 31 March.

The Next Level Project helps people who have successfully found employment to further develop their skills, and the BBO Programme aims to help people into paid work.

We held a celebration event in January which over 50 people attended, showcasing the range of opportunities and support available through our Communities team.

So far, Next Level has supported and mentored 831 people. Jonathan Potter is one of the many who has gained employment as a result of the project.

He said: "I began with a placement as a caretaker in the Neighbourhood Services team. From this, I gained new skills which I could add to my CV, and I soon secured a job in the team."

"Taking part in this project really does open doors for you, and it helps you to stand out to employers."

To find out more, email employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk or visit our [website](#).



All smiles at the celebration event



Giving information about the project

Let us know what's happening in your community:

OngoHomes

@OngoUK

Fancy winning a £30 shopping voucher?

We hope you enjoyed this edition of Key News.

Your feedback is really important in shaping how your future Key News look.

We had over 80 responses in the survey competition to the December edition - this helped to influence the content and layout of this issue.

Congratulations to Sheila Norris who was selected at random as the winner of a Love to Shop voucher.

If you would like to be in with a chance of winning a £30 Love to Shop voucher, **complete this survey** and include your email address at the end to be entered into the prize draw.

Alternatively, you can complete the survey at surveymonkey.co.uk/r/februarykeynews

Any personal information you provide to us will be treated in accordance with current UK data protection law and our data protection policies, procedures and privacy notices in place from time to time. For full details visit our website.

Entries must be in by Friday 27 March 2020.

The winner will be drawn from all completed surveys. The Editor's decision is final.

You can find terms and conditions on our website.

Want to help decide the content for future edition of Key News, and to make sure all documents available to tenants are easy-to-read and relevant?

We have a Publications Panel, a largely digital group, who review and influence all publications. Being a part of the group could boost your CV, help you to learn new skills, give you the chance to make a difference, and much more!

Visit our website

Email our Customer Engagement team